

TWIN AMAZON



By John Russell Fearn

THERE were four people seated at the huge polished table in the directors' room of the Dodd Space Line building. Before them were papers, statistical files, records of the space company's activities, and future plans.

Chris Wilson, gray-haired and heavy-shouldered, mused through the records before him while his wife, Ethel, looked on. Now and again she gave a faintly puzzled smile and shook her head.

"I don't understand half of all this, Chris," she protested. "You know I've no commercial instincts."

"Shame on you, as a director of the line!" Chris Wilson reproved, grinning. "Anyway, it's all quite straightforward. We have here simply

a statement of past successes—and failures—together with a blueprint of our future intentions. To remain successful we have to extend our activities, of course. That's normal with any company, even one running spaceships from here to Venus and back. This morning as soon as Vi arrives we're going to see what we can do to include Mars in our route."

Across the table the gigantic Com-

mander Howard Kerrigan, president of the Venusian end of the space line, had relapsed into meditation. Ruth, his wife, a slender, gray-eyed woman with hair whitening at the temples, glanced at her watch.

"It's past 10," she announced. "Vi's late."

"She'll be here," Kerrigan told her. "She's never missed an appointment in her life—and she certainly won't miss a meeting as important as this."

He turned in expectancy as the door opened. A young woman with black hair, very blue eyes and dressed in the simplest two-piece and hat which 1980 could produce, came in.

"Any room for a little one?" she asked. "I'm going on a shopping tour and I want some money. They said I'd find you in here."

"Enter the crying daughter," Chris sighed, but he kissed the girl affectionately as she stopped first to him and then to her mother. "And so because you want money you have the temerity to burst into the directors' room, have you? You're not a director, you know—yet."

"No; but I shall be some day," the girl answered brightly. "And anyway I'm always interested in whatever Aunt Vi does—which is one excuse, apart from money, for my being here. You haven't kept things to yourselves so much as you imagine, remember!

little Ethel keeps her ears open. Aunt Vi and I are just like sisters. Look at the things we've done together! Conquered Venus between us; then there was that spot of bother at the South Pole—"

"Yes, but that was four years ago, dear!" her mother laughed. "And those sort of adventures are out henceforth, I hope. I don't like my little girl getting mixed up in such things."

"Not even with Aunt Vi?" The younger Ethel gave a reproving look. "Mum, you know I couldn't be safer than when I'm with her."

She turned to the big window and gazed out upon the roofs and radio beacon towers of 1980 London. Absently her gaze looked westward, from which direction an air taxi bearing Violet Ray Brant, the extraordinary Golden Amazon, was due at any moment.

"Sisters..." Commander Kerrigan mused. "That has a bit of a queer ring somehow."

The girl turned from the window to glance at him.

"What's queer about it, Uncle Howard?"

"Chiefly the fact that you are 26 and that your Aunt Vi must be about 40 years older. Oh, I know you wouldn't think it to look at her—but to consider you as sisters! Think of the age difference!"

"Oh, Howard, stop classing Vi as an ordinary woman!" his wife protested. "When you're in the grave—and I, too—she'll still look as though she is in the 20's." Ruth Kerrigan sighed wistfully. "That Dr. Axton, way back in 1940, certainly must have been a wonderful surgeon, considering what he did to Vi's glandular structure. Gave her 500 years of life,

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED IN BOOK OR ANY OTHER FORM

**STAR WEEKLY
COMPLETE NOVEL**

TORONTO, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1948

darkness three miles away and then vanished—evidently through one of the opened valves giving access to the surface.

The Amazon took her head. "They're going to Earth. Let's see if we can't break into this radio room."

With added urgency they leaped from one roof to the other and came to the wide open gate that clearly is radio station.

"There's a way here," Kerrigan said, pointing to a grating in the roof. "Probably a ventilation shaft but I'll risk going down if it will you."

They knuckled the grating out of its socket and warm air came up. Then Kerrigan shaded his eyes and peered down into the depths.

"It's narrow enough for me to brace my back and feet against the sides and prevent a bounding drop," he said. "I'll go first and see what I can do."

Then they heard English coming from the voice of the loudspeakers, and they strained their ears to catch the words. This was not any more the babble of the other loudspeakers. Parts of sentences did, however, reach them.

"From this latest information from Scotland Yard it is now assumed that the Amazon is now in the hands of the interlopers in Martian bodies."

"It's obvious we cannot fight the superior science of Mars," said the voice. "The interlopers are still corroding our civilization, despite our best faith in Golden Amazon. It is our duty to desperate through the position is—"

The voice ceased speaking abruptly. "What do you mean by that?" Kerrigan asked. "It sounded like a news bulletin from London."

"I think that's exactly what it was picked up by these Martian instruments."

The Amazon's gaze moved to the double doors as they opened magnificently admit an official. As the doors swung before closed there was a brief glimpse of what lay beyond them. There were long tables, control instruments and, scattered through the glimpses had been—there was something of vital importance.

"I believe I've got it," the Amazon whispered tensely, her eyes glowing. "Did you happen to see beyond those doors just now when they were closed?"

"For a second or two, yes. Another radio room, isn't it?"

"No—it's an operating room—the same one, I think, where I was forced to change places with Valina. Evidently all the science laboratories in this city are gathered under one roof—radio, surgery, and so on. But that's the point. I saw a glimpse of the double, sealed in a corner."

"Are you sure?" Kerrigan questioned urgently.

"Almost. Well until the doors open again."

Before this happened nearly 10 minutes had passed, as the official who had come to the radio room took his departure. Once more as the doors swung there was that vision beyond—and the time there was no doubt about it is a corner of the operating room, a blonde-headed, black-skinned woman was seated, a gleaming belt about her waist.

"You're right," Kerrigan said. "I suppose they brought your double to the surgery to try to find out what makes her tick."

"And apparently they haven't discovered her yet, or taken away her weapons. The Amazon's weapons are real, remember—not dummies. Her photo-electric brain is so sensitive that it is able to respond to my telephonic orders and nearly to Let's see what I can do—and keep quiet while I concentrate."

Kerrigan obeyed, his eyes fixed on the closed doors. The Amazon crouched like a mouse, her face pressed through the grating, the force of her normal mind hurdling the gap to the motionless synthetic being in the surgery beyond.

Then suddenly the doors swung open and Amazon it was there, her head moving from side to side. She apparently looked about her. In each hand she held a gleaming ray weapon. One or two of the radio technicians came around casually at her and then started.

Before they could make any move Amazon it leaped forward, her arms outstretched, and dropped to the floor. The weapons in her hands fired momentarily, sending brilliant prisms of light before which the demoralized radio technicians helplessly collapsed. In the space of five seconds the room was empty to place with phenomenal agility, she had reduced the dozen men either to death or long unconscious.

"Come and open this grating!" the Amazon commanded her double, and

immediately her image came hurrying forward with a flash, glancing store in her violet eyes.

Looking her palm fingers in the metal mesh she tapped at it and finally pulled the whole facing away from its supports. Quickly the Amazon and Kerrigan scrambled out into the radio room.

"What about a message to Earth?" Kerrigan asked.

"It would take too long to solve which equipment to use, and how to use it," the Amazon answered. "I've another idea. Come on, to the surgery—and you, too," she added to her image.

They burst through the big radio room and into the operating room adjoining. As they entered it, three surgeons, white-gloved but without gloves and masks came to a standstill in an advance toward the door.

"Hold!" the Amazon ordered them, and from her image she whipped the two guns.

The surgeons stayed her order. Their eyes were in wonder from their scanty diet metrics to the motionless Martian figure in the center of the room.

"You!" the Amazon demanded, looking at the centroment man. "You are the one who performed the brain operation on the Martians and myself. I recognize your face. Can you understand my language?"

"Yes, I understand it," the surgeon answered, with a somewhat cynical smile. "I observe that that brain of yours is as agile as mine."

"I should have had more sense than to leave your image free. We were just making preparations to dissect it."

The Amazon said: "You've a job to do. I want my brain transferred again, and this time into the skull of my image here. In that way I can become the Golden Amazon again since the body is an exact duplicate of the original one Valina stole from me."

"And you think I'd do that?" the surgeon asked.

"I know you will!" the Amazon retorted, then she glanced briefly at Kerrigan. "Remember, then, don't forget to lock somehow. See that every one of them is secured. I don't want disturbances for the next hour."

Kerrigan nodded and went on a swift investigation of the surgery.

All the locks, he discovered, were electrically jammed in place by a mere movement of a switch. When he had secured every one, including those which led into the radio room, he came back to the girl's side.

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, addressing the surgeon again, "you performed the brain operation on the Martians and myself."

"Correct," the Martian agreed. "Those two surgeons here were going to dissect your image."

"Exactly—and I've no use for them." The guns stabbed with their lever-actuated pencils. Kerrigan looked on in rather wondering horror as the surgeons on each side of their superior sagged and died.

"I have no time for gentle tactics," the Amazon explained lightly. "None of you have shown any mercy—so expect none from me. You are my enemy. I left to carry out my orders, whether you wish to or not."

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, "I operate on you!" The surgeon shook his head deliberately. "I prefer to die before doing that."

The Amazon handed the guns to Kerrigan and then stood motionless, waiting until it became evident that she stood back in curiosity at first, then with a growing fixity as he felt the bright gleam of the photo-electric human will being into his skull.

She buried her commands into the man's brain with the force of a battering ram until it became evident from his rigid, mask-like expression that he was completely under her influence. Only then did she relax and look at Kerrigan.

"I've used post-hypnotism," she explained. "By the way, the interlopers will obey the orders I've given him—in five minutes. Those orders are to transfer my brain to the image of my image and he'll do it because he can't help himself. The moment he has done it, though, he'll be free to do as he pleases and attempt anything, shoot him—and shoot to kill. Understand?"

"All right," the Amazon agreed, and stood waiting to see what happened next.

Then the Amazon turned to her double and spoke shortly.

"Lie down on that table!"

When the blonde, blackhead being had done so the Amazon went over to her and strapped her down. Then

she laid herself in the adjoining table and had Kerrigan buckle her into it. Then he had just completed the task when the motionless surgeon seemed to remember something.

He turned quickly and moved toward the table, performing his strange task in a lightning-like manner. He pressed a button which brought instruments on a rubber-wheeled stand to his side from a distant part of the surgery.

Grim-faced, Kerrigan looked at the guns ready, watching every move. For the Amazon, the laboratory slowly blanked out as her image faded into the anaesthetic.

CHAPTER XII

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to the Amazon with the awareness that a white-faced man was striking downwards toward her. She felt the arm in its plunge, judging from the sound a long medical-plastic tube with splinters on the metal floor.

In a sudden surge full consciousness returned to her, and with it the knowledge that the operation had been entirely performed. She was again, to all intents and purposes, herself—and she was holding the wrist of the doctor, who had performed the operation. His eyes were blazing with fury as he tried to wrench himself free of her grip.

It took the Amazon perhaps three seconds to grasp what had been intended. The doctor of the anaesthetic tube were bubbling and fuming on the floor, rising into the metal. Some of the gas was blowing into the Amazon's face, with his full gas mask nearby. The Amazon's eyes jerked from Kerrigan back to the surgeon; then she gave a slow, deadly smile.

"So, my friend, you were not quite quick enough," she inquired. "The moment you released my wrist I realized the nature of the operation you had performed you tried to destroy me did you?"

Suddenly she strained with all her power and broke the central belt binding her hands. She twisted, and on the surgeon's wrist with steady pressure until she saw perspiration bead on his forehead.

"I'm not fast enough to attempt to choke you," she said. "I've learned that the hard way on a Martian anatomy. I just want to hurt you and I get free."

She drew up her legs with a sudden convulsive effort and the last era of straps broke. Immediately she slid off the table and to her feet, and though she was 16 inches shorter than the seven-foot Martian her tremendous grip on his wrist twisted him round to the position she required.

"I like to pay in kind, my friend, if I can," she said, and before the surgeon could grasp her intentions her steel-fingered hand had seized his left wrist. She swung him round in a circle and then released him, watching as he fell. "You are my enemy. I left to carry out my orders, whether you wish to or not."

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, "I operate on you!" The surgeon shook his head deliberately. "I prefer to die before doing that."

The Amazon handed the guns to Kerrigan and then stood motionless, waiting until it became evident that she stood back in curiosity at first, then with a growing fixity as he felt the bright gleam of the photo-electric human will being into his skull.

She buried her commands into the man's brain with the force of a battering ram until it became evident from his rigid, mask-like expression that he was completely under her influence. Only then did she relax and look at Kerrigan.

"I've used post-hypnotism," she explained. "By the way, the interlopers will obey the orders I've given him—in five minutes. Those orders are to transfer my brain to the image of my image and he'll do it because he can't help himself. The moment he has done it, though, he'll be free to do as he pleases and attempt anything, shoot him—and shoot to kill. Understand?"

"All right," the Amazon agreed, and stood waiting to see what happened next.

Then the Amazon turned to her double and spoke shortly.

"Lie down on that table!"

When the blonde, blackhead being had done so the Amazon went over to her and strapped her down. Then

she laid herself in the adjoining table and had Kerrigan buckle her into it. Then he had just completed the task when the motionless surgeon seemed to remember something.

He turned quickly and moved toward the table, performing his strange task in a lightning-like manner. He pressed a button which brought instruments on a rubber-wheeled stand to his side from a distant part of the surgery.

Grim-faced, Kerrigan looked at the guns ready, watching every move. For the Amazon, the laboratory slowly blanked out as her image faded into the anaesthetic.

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to the Amazon with the awareness that a white-faced man was striking downwards toward her. She felt the arm in its plunge, judging from the sound a long medical-plastic tube with splinters on the metal floor.

In a sudden surge full consciousness returned to her, and with it the knowledge that the operation had been entirely performed. She was again, to all intents and purposes, herself—and she was holding the wrist of the doctor, who had performed the operation. His eyes were blazing with fury as he tried to wrench himself free of her grip.

It took the Amazon perhaps three seconds to grasp what had been intended. The doctor of the anaesthetic tube were bubbling and fuming on the floor, rising into the metal. Some of the gas was blowing into the Amazon's face, with his full gas mask nearby. The Amazon's eyes jerked from Kerrigan back to the surgeon; then she gave a slow, deadly smile.

"So, my friend, you were not quite quick enough," she inquired. "The moment you released my wrist I realized the nature of the operation you had performed you tried to destroy me did you?"

"I'll go first and see what I can do."

Then suddenly the doors swung open and Amazon it was there, her head moving from side to side. She apparently looked about her. In each hand she held a gleaming ray weapon. One or two of the radio technicians came around casually at her and then started.

Before they could make any move Amazon it leaped forward, her arms outstretched, and dropped to the floor. The weapons in her hands fired momentarily, sending brilliant prisms of light before which the demoralized radio technicians helplessly collapsed. In the space of five seconds the room was empty to place with phenomenal agility, she had reduced the dozen men either to death or long unconscious.

"Come and open this grating!" the Amazon commanded her double, and

immediately her image came hurrying forward with a flash, glancing store in her violet eyes.

Looking her palm fingers in the metal mesh she tapped at it and finally pulled the whole facing away from its supports. Quickly the Amazon and Kerrigan scrambled out into the radio room.

"What about a message to Earth?" Kerrigan asked.

"It would take too long to solve which equipment to use, and how to use it," the Amazon answered. "I've another idea. Come on, to the surgery—and you, too," she added to her image.

They burst through the big radio room and into the operating room adjoining. As they entered it, three surgeons, white-gloved but without gloves and masks came to a standstill in an advance toward the door.

"Hold!" the Amazon ordered them, and from her image she whipped the two guns.

The surgeons stayed her order. Their eyes were in wonder from their scanty diet metrics to the motionless Martian figure in the center of the room.

"You!" the Amazon demanded, looking at the centroment man. "You are the one who performed the brain operation on the Martians and myself. I recognize your face. Can you understand my language?"

"Yes, I understand it," the surgeon answered, with a somewhat cynical smile. "I observe that that brain of yours is as agile as mine."

"I should have had more sense than to leave your image free. We were just making preparations to dissect it."

The Amazon said: "You've a job to do. I want my brain transferred again, and this time into the skull of my image here. In that way I can become the Golden Amazon again since the body is an exact duplicate of the original one Valina stole from me."

"And you think I'd do that?" the surgeon asked.

"I know you will!" the Amazon retorted, then she glanced briefly at Kerrigan. "Remember, then, don't forget to lock somehow. See that every one of them is secured. I don't want disturbances for the next hour."

Kerrigan nodded and went on a swift investigation of the surgery.

All the locks, he discovered, were electrically jammed in place by a mere movement of a switch. When he had secured every one, including those which led into the radio room, he came back to the girl's side.

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, addressing the surgeon again, "you performed the brain operation on the Martians and myself."

"Correct," the Martian agreed. "Those two surgeons here were going to dissect your image."

"Exactly—and I've no use for them." The guns stabbed with their lever-actuated pencils. Kerrigan looked on in rather wondering horror as the surgeons on each side of their superior sagged and died.

"I have no time for gentle tactics," the Amazon explained lightly. "None of you have shown any mercy—so expect none from me. You are my enemy. I left to carry out my orders, whether you wish to or not."

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, "I operate on you!" The surgeon shook his head deliberately. "I prefer to die before doing that."

The Amazon handed the guns to Kerrigan and then stood motionless, waiting until it became evident that she stood back in curiosity at first, then with a growing fixity as he felt the bright gleam of the photo-electric human will being into his skull.

She buried her commands into the man's brain with the force of a battering ram until it became evident from his rigid, mask-like expression that he was completely under her influence. Only then did she relax and look at Kerrigan.

"I've used post-hypnotism," she explained. "By the way, the interlopers will obey the orders I've given him—in five minutes. Those orders are to transfer my brain to the image of my image and he'll do it because he can't help himself. The moment he has done it, though, he'll be free to do as he pleases and attempt anything, shoot him—and shoot to kill. Understand?"

"All right," the Amazon agreed, and stood waiting to see what happened next.

Then the Amazon turned to her double and spoke shortly.

"Lie down on that table!"

When the blonde, blackhead being had done so the Amazon went over to her and strapped her down. Then

she laid herself in the adjoining table and had Kerrigan buckle her into it. Then he had just completed the task when the motionless surgeon seemed to remember something.

He turned quickly and moved toward the table, performing his strange task in a lightning-like manner. He pressed a button which brought instruments on a rubber-wheeled stand to his side from a distant part of the surgery.

Grim-faced, Kerrigan looked at the guns ready, watching every move. For the Amazon, the laboratory slowly blanked out as her image faded into the anaesthetic.

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to the Amazon with the awareness that a white-faced man was striking downwards toward her. She felt the arm in its plunge, judging from the sound a long medical-plastic tube with splinters on the metal floor.

In a sudden surge full consciousness returned to her, and with it the knowledge that the operation had been entirely performed. She was again, to all intents and purposes, herself—and she was holding the wrist of the doctor, who had performed the operation. His eyes were blazing with fury as he tried to wrench himself free of her grip.

It took the Amazon perhaps three seconds to grasp what had been intended. The doctor of the anaesthetic tube were bubbling and fuming on the floor, rising into the metal. Some of the gas was blowing into the Amazon's face, with his full gas mask nearby. The Amazon's eyes jerked from Kerrigan back to the surgeon; then she gave a slow, deadly smile.

"So, my friend, you were not quite quick enough," she inquired. "The moment you released my wrist I realized the nature of the operation you had performed you tried to destroy me did you?"

Suddenly she strained with all her power and broke the central belt binding her hands. She twisted, and on the surgeon's wrist with steady pressure until she saw perspiration bead on his forehead.

"I'm not fast enough to attempt to choke you," she said. "I've learned that the hard way on a Martian anatomy. I just want to hurt you and I get free."

She drew up her legs with a sudden convulsive effort and the last era of straps broke. Immediately she slid off the table and to her feet, and though she was 16 inches shorter than the seven-foot Martian her tremendous grip on his wrist twisted him round to the position she required.

"I like to pay in kind, my friend, if I can," she said, and before the surgeon could grasp her intentions her steel-fingered hand had seized his left wrist. She swung him round in a circle and then released him, watching as he fell. "You are my enemy. I left to carry out my orders, whether you wish to or not."

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, "I operate on you!" The surgeon shook his head deliberately. "I prefer to die before doing that."

The Amazon handed the guns to Kerrigan and then stood motionless, waiting until it became evident that she stood back in curiosity at first, then with a growing fixity as he felt the bright gleam of the photo-electric human will being into his skull.

She buried her commands into the man's brain with the force of a battering ram until it became evident from his rigid, mask-like expression that he was completely under her influence. Only then did she relax and look at Kerrigan.

"I've used post-hypnotism," she explained. "By the way, the interlopers will obey the orders I've given him—in five minutes. Those orders are to transfer my brain to the image of my image and he'll do it because he can't help himself. The moment he has done it, though, he'll be free to do as he pleases and attempt anything, shoot him—and shoot to kill. Understand?"

"All right," the Amazon agreed, and stood waiting to see what happened next.

Then the Amazon turned to her double and spoke shortly.

"Lie down on that table!"

When the blonde, blackhead being had done so the Amazon went over to her and strapped her down. Then

she laid herself in the adjoining table and had Kerrigan buckle her into it. Then he had just completed the task when the motionless surgeon seemed to remember something.

He turned quickly and moved toward the table, performing his strange task in a lightning-like manner. He pressed a button which brought instruments on a rubber-wheeled stand to his side from a distant part of the surgery.

Grim-faced, Kerrigan looked at the guns ready, watching every move. For the Amazon, the laboratory slowly blanked out as her image faded into the anaesthetic.

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to the Amazon with the awareness that a white-faced man was striking downwards toward her. She felt the arm in its plunge, judging from the sound a long medical-plastic tube with splinters on the metal floor.

In a sudden surge full consciousness returned to her, and with it the knowledge that the operation had been entirely performed. She was again, to all intents and purposes, herself—and she was holding the wrist of the doctor, who had performed the operation. His eyes were blazing with fury as he tried to wrench himself free of her grip.

It took the Amazon perhaps three seconds to grasp what had been intended. The doctor of the anaesthetic tube were bubbling and fuming on the floor, rising into the metal. Some of the gas was blowing into the Amazon's face, with his full gas mask nearby. The Amazon's eyes jerked from Kerrigan back to the surgeon; then she gave a slow, deadly smile.

"So, my friend, you were not quite quick enough," she inquired. "The moment you released my wrist I realized the nature of the operation you had performed you tried to destroy me did you?"

Suddenly she strained with all her power and broke the central belt binding her hands. She twisted, and on the surgeon's wrist with steady pressure until she saw perspiration bead on his forehead.

"I'm not fast enough to attempt to choke you," she said. "I've learned that the hard way on a Martian anatomy. I just want to hurt you and I get free."

She drew up her legs with a sudden convulsive effort and the last era of straps broke. Immediately she slid off the table and to her feet, and though she was 16 inches shorter than the seven-foot Martian her tremendous grip on his wrist twisted him round to the position she required.

"I like to pay in kind, my friend, if I can," she said, and before the surgeon could grasp her intentions her steel-fingered hand had seized his left wrist. She swung him round in a circle and then released him, watching as he fell. "You are my enemy. I left to carry out my orders, whether you wish to or not."

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, "I operate on you!" The surgeon shook his head deliberately. "I prefer to die before doing that."

The Amazon handed the guns to Kerrigan and then stood motionless, waiting until it became evident that she stood back in curiosity at first, then with a growing fixity as he felt the bright gleam of the photo-electric human will being into his skull.

She buried her commands into the man's brain with the force of a battering ram until it became evident from his rigid, mask-like expression that he was completely under her influence. Only then did she relax and look at Kerrigan.

"I've used post-hypnotism," she explained. "By the way, the interlopers will obey the orders I've given him—in five minutes. Those orders are to transfer my brain to the image of my image and he'll do it because he can't help himself. The moment he has done it, though, he'll be free to do as he pleases and attempt anything, shoot him—and shoot to kill. Understand?"

"All right," the Amazon agreed, and stood waiting to see what happened next.

Then the Amazon turned to her double and spoke shortly.

"Lie down on that table!"

When the blonde, blackhead being had done so the Amazon went over to her and strapped her down. Then

she laid herself in the adjoining table and had Kerrigan buckle her into it. Then he had just completed the task when the motionless surgeon seemed to remember something.

He turned quickly and moved toward the table, performing his strange task in a lightning-like manner. He pressed a button which brought instruments on a rubber-wheeled stand to his side from a distant part of the surgery.

Grim-faced, Kerrigan looked at the guns ready, watching every move. For the Amazon, the laboratory slowly blanked out as her image faded into the anaesthetic.

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to the Amazon with the awareness that a white-faced man was striking downwards toward her. She felt the arm in its plunge, judging from the sound a long medical-plastic tube with splinters on the metal floor.

In a sudden surge full consciousness returned to her, and with it the knowledge that the operation had been entirely performed. She was again, to all intents and purposes, herself—and she was holding the wrist of the doctor, who had performed the operation. His eyes were blazing with fury as he tried to wrench himself free of her grip.

It took the Amazon perhaps three seconds to grasp what had been intended. The doctor of the anaesthetic tube were bubbling and fuming on the floor, rising into the metal. Some of the gas was blowing into the Amazon's face, with his full gas mask nearby. The Amazon's eyes jerked from Kerrigan back to the surgeon; then she gave a slow, deadly smile.

"So, my friend, you were not quite quick enough," she inquired. "The moment you released my wrist I realized the nature of the operation you had performed you tried to destroy me did you?"

Suddenly she strained with all her power and broke the central belt binding her hands. She twisted, and on the surgeon's wrist with steady pressure until she saw perspiration bead on his forehead.

"I'm not fast enough to attempt to choke you," she said. "I've learned that the hard way on a Martian anatomy. I just want to hurt you and I get free."

She drew up her legs with a sudden convulsive effort and the last era of straps broke. Immediately she slid off the table and to her feet, and though she was 16 inches shorter than the seven-foot Martian her tremendous grip on his wrist twisted him round to the position she required.

"I like to pay in kind, my friend, if I can," she said, and before the surgeon could grasp her intentions her steel-fingered hand had seized his left wrist. She swung him round in a circle and then released him, watching as he fell. "You are my enemy. I left to carry out my orders, whether you wish to or not."

"On the corner of the table," the Amazon said, "I operate on you!" The surgeon shook his head deliberately. "I prefer to die before doing that."

The Amazon handed the guns to Kerrigan and then stood motionless, waiting until it became evident that she stood back in curiosity at first, then with a growing fixity as he felt the bright gleam of the photo-electric human will being into his skull.

She buried her commands into the man's brain with the force of a battering ram until it became evident from his rigid, mask-like expression that he was completely under her influence. Only then did she relax and look at Kerrigan.

"I've used post-hypnotism," she explained. "By the way, the interlopers

Instead, the girl felt a savage pain at the back of her neck as the butt of a bludgeon descended on her. She braced and dashed, she crashed on the control room floor.

"Get up!" Ilihan ordered coldly. "And don't attempt any more moves like that! You can't get away with it, not whilst I have you in my hands. You are dead, I have no objection to wounding you if I have to—but I will not kill you. That goes for your enjoyment of the final scene."

He seized her arm and whirled her on her feet, glaring down at her angry face. She was so weak she could not stand ready. Then with a fierce shove she sent her spinning back into the control room.

"Drive back to Valdon," he ordered. "And suppose I refuse?"

"You do, I will wait myself, using your brain for my knowledge of how to control this craft. And I'll insist that you can do so much faster during the journey."

The Amazon reflected slyly. Injury she dared not risk. Tight though her circumstances were she still had a chance to fight as long as she remained in one place. With a little luck she might win in the power struggle. The Ultra's nose rounded, and began the trip back toward Mars.

Even sound reaching her narrowly, and after a while she glanced up.

"It seems strange to me, Ilihan, that only Claire De Fyre warned you of this place," she admitted. "Did they reach the rendezvous, didn't they read my mind, too?"

"They made no effort to," Claire answered. "You were the victim. Claire De Fyre, however, was suspicious. Many of our 'unsuspected' subjects have sworn for some time of the cry going on on your planet—but it is at an end, so is your own career."

The Amazon's eyes never told her many a little before her friend—yet I am still here."

Upon the return to Mars, settling the Ultra at the space ground from which it had started, the Amazon found herself forced to leave her machine without a chance of defiance if by her own hand she did not. Ilihan kept close behind her.

"Get up," he instructed. "I have all my plans laid for you—and have all ever since you returned here as our supposed beloved mistress. You killed me, and I am now seeking the most thorough justification for you suffering the same fate."

The Amazon made no response, how as she was in grappling with the problem. That there was no immediate way escape was perfectly obvious to her. The great spaceports were thickly tenanted with Martians, men and machines of alien machinery, who were tending the vast assembly of flying saucers which filled every available space. Evidently Ilihan noticed her absorption, for he said:

"We are carrying out your scheme to go to earth in one hour and overhauling what remains there. Departure has been arranged for 48 hours hence. I shall see your Ultra so that the whole people will be fooled until the last moment into thinking it is you returning. Turn to the right!" he broke off, and the girl obeyed.

With every second, she realized, she was walking farther and farther from the Ultra, but under the bias of her costume was the magnetic compass, tuned to the vessel's magnetic field. She knew that she would never come to reach the spaceship again. At the moment such a chance could not be missed more.

The walk she and Ilihan took down a short and deserted side street between main buildings led to a flight of metal steps descending into a long, seemingly endless passage with a strong light, almost as bright as the sun, as the two followed a narrow pathway, there raced a fast flowing stream of flying saucers.

"Excellent place for such a you," another right turn took them into a vast machine-made cavern. The floor was lighted and with walls of solid metal—whence, from the look of it, the Amazon judged, he got.

In the middle of the metal floor stood a narrow frame of similar type metal. This first Ilihan saw, and his purpose was now evident to the girl as Ilihan hurried her into it and clamped her out of it.

She was walled and pin her arms to her sides. She pulled and strained but the metal was solid, massive, solid than anything she had ever known before. She looked at it, confining

her worst suspicions that the stuff was not, and therefore immediately her mind was flooded with the thought of himself a grimly triumphant smile.

"You cannot break free of this frame, Amazon. I have made it stronger for greater than any of your muscles can produce. In 48 hours we shall leave this planet—every one of you, two and a half hours after that, if I read your mind correctly, 1,000,000 miles of the way will be made, and I shall fire your Ultra's proton gun at our two sons and blow this world asunder. All you have to do is wait here and wait, through the hours, measuring the moments, and as you do so think of our destined masterpiece. I will leave the lights burning. When we depart for earth they will go out, and that way you will know how long you have left."

The Martian contemplated the girl's expression, under-timed face. "You thought the sound of it, reaching footfalls and the Amazon was left alone."

He moved toward her and the expected he would take advantage of her helplessness to deliver a blow; but instead he unbuttoned the belt from about his waist and put it over his shoulders.

"Thank you for mentally warning me that this belt might help you," he murmured. "And now you will take my leave."

He gave a slow, crystal look and departed, his last words, "I am contented," as he passed through the gigantic opening and into the main sewer passway.

There was the sound of his retreating footfalls and the Amazon was left alone.

For several minutes she remained motionless, her head right, the manacles firmly gripped into her ankles and arms. As was her custom, she was watching the scene before her attempting to find a way out of it. There were no advantages this time save one, the fact that she was alone and that there was no door to break down if she could get free of this frame.

Three things she had: the upper world-wide if she could break free, a way even straight to the Ultra since her compass had been attempting to find a way out of it. There were no advantages this time save one, the fact that she was alone and that there was no door to break down if she could get free of this frame.

She thought the sound of it, reaching footfalls and the Amazon was left alone.

He moved toward her and the expected he would take advantage of her helplessness to deliver a blow; but instead he unbuttoned the belt from about his waist and put it over his shoulders.

"Thank you for mentally warning me that this belt might help you," he murmured. "And now you will take my leave."

He gave a slow, crystal look and departed, his last words, "I am contented," as he passed through the gigantic opening and into the main sewer passway.

There was the sound of his retreating footfalls and the Amazon was left alone.

For several minutes she remained motionless, her head right, the manacles firmly gripped into her ankles and arms. As was her custom, she was watching the scene before her attempting to find a way out of it. There were no advantages this time save one, the fact that she was alone and that there was no door to break down if she could get free of this frame.

Three things she had: the upper world-wide if she could break free, a way even straight to the Ultra since her compass had been attempting to find a way out of it. There were no advantages this time save one, the fact that she was alone and that there was no door to break down if she could get free of this frame.

She thought the sound of it, reaching footfalls and the Amazon was left alone.

He moved toward her and the expected he would take advantage of her helplessness to deliver a blow; but instead he unbuttoned the belt from about his waist and put it over his shoulders.

"Thank you for mentally warning me that this belt might help you," he murmured. "And now you will take my leave."

He gave a slow, crystal look and departed, his last words, "I am contented," as he passed through the gigantic opening and into the main sewer passway.

There was the sound of his retreating footfalls and the Amazon was left alone.

For several minutes she remained motionless, her head right, the manacles firmly gripped into her ankles and arms. As was her custom, she was watching the scene before her attempting to find a way out of it. There were no advantages this time save one, the fact that she was alone and that there was no door to break down if she could get free of this frame.

Three things she had: the upper world-wide if she could break free, a way even straight to the Ultra since her compass had been attempting to find a way out of it. There were no advantages this time save one, the fact that she was alone and that there was no door to break down if she could get free of this frame.

She thought the sound of it, reaching footfalls and the Amazon was left alone.

she fell on her back. The execution of the remainder of her plan relied on muscular effort, aided by the lesser gravity.

Pushing herself upward upon one arm, she found the strain of the straps, and so on to her face—then a pause and so on to her back again. Again on to her head, and then she had reached the nearer wall of the cavern.

She waited for a while and then lowered herself from her face on to her side. The wall was reached by her hands, and she was now in the frame against the wall.

With the tip of her fingers, her wrists and her hands she reached the rough projections in the metal behind her and seized hold of one larger than the others.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

The next to work once more—depression, three times, and wedged the frame accurately. Then again, and yet again, until she was wedged into the frame, her position only by a finger-hold, and that held handily. But at least she was on the wall.

She moved the frame up very slightly and wedged it over the small metal spur so that her head was the last thing to be ground while her feet were still upon it.

Two more efforts, with a long rest between each one, brought her diagonally to the wall—then the frame slipped and she crashed down on her side again.

back of her neck, laying her attention on the ground. Quickly the Amazon pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

Real she removed the woman's quarter, fastened the Ultra's head on the ground, and then she pulled the Ultra's head down and dived it herself, together with the queer headpiece which she arranged as she did so, so that her head was beneath it.

"You, my friend, will do just as you are told," the Amazon interrupted. "I don't intend to let you go until I'm satisfied you are not intended to incriminate me. You are going to give an order to your followers over the intercoms. The order is simple: You have had information over the radio from Earth that it will be safe to detain all the Martians following you must take the same course as you do if they are to survive descent. That's all. You'll be obeyed because you are the leader."

"I won't do it!" Ilian declared in indignation. "I know what you intend, and, if I keep silent you can't get away with it, then I can't—"

The proto-giant blazed suddenly across his eyes and left his hatline like a live green fire.

"Oh, I'll the Amazon said. "Or have your eyes decided?"

She snapped on the radio instruments and waited.

"Still the Martian hesitated, then as she knew she was at a level with his face he spoke quickly:

"Attention all officers! And he gave, over the word, the order the girl had commanded. Satisfied, she nodded and switched off.

"Which I'll have no connection with you, my friend," she commented.

CHAPTER XXI

RADING her thoughts and intentions he found himself at her, a seven-foot body bearing her backward before he could fire her gun. He whiplashed it from her hand and then dropped it again, as her flat-lashed squarely in his face. He had not recovered from the impact before the flat dove again, and again, battering him back against the control room.

As he hit the wall the flat descended for the final time, a lance-like downward conversation on the back of his neck. He sagged weakly and dropped.

The Amazon stood before him, unconscious and still breathing. She snatched the Ultra's automatic pilot and then handed the Amazonian robot over her shoulder and here his hand passed to take the Ultra's controls. He died companion she also carried there, slanting and locking the door on them.

Returning to the control chair, and taking leave that she could not be seen through the window by the attendant floor, she began to change the Ultra's course, retreating it round in a wide arc and noting that in obedience to orders the flying saucers were doing likewise.

She deviated—many millions miles away from the approaching earth, keeping well to the left of it—and, with the passage of the hours, left the course for Venus. How the time passed did not concern her. She went about her task mechanically, though there were times when she did wonder what the officers aboard the flying saucers must be thinking of this deliberate by-passing of Earth and setting of the course for Venus. She relied on the fact that, having been told to obey orders—and believing them to be genuine—she knew Ilian himself had spoken them—they would do so to the death. No doubt many of them were wondering why he had not destroyed Mars at the million-mile range—unless it was possible, but she knew he had been told to himself and his now dead colleagues.

Now Venus was not the Amazon's objective. She steered as far to one side of it as she had from Earth, and resumed hurling the Ultra outward, taking care that her distance from the nearest flying saucers was great enough to prevent any chance of her thoughts being read across the void.

Hour after hour she sat tirelessly at the controls, unable to trust the plan drawn in mind to the Amazonian pilot. With ever mounting velocity, pursued faithfully by the guided flying saucers, she continued in the direction of Mercury's orbit, that farflung erratic little world—a withered walnut of a planet, scorched on its outward side so that metals boiled, as frozen on the night side that the very rocks were split and crumbling from.

The Amazon's attention was not concentrated on little Mercury away to the left in the void. Instead she dropped a line of dark circles over the dark ports and through them looked at the awe-inspiring majesty of the sun. "Within a moment that passed the Ultra was speeding nearer to him, his brilliance becoming gradually so intense that the

Amazon had to give up more layers of darkening glass to see her scorching eyes. Behind her, the fifth dark circle over their windows, the flying saucers were still trailing, but the radio was blasting furiously in the range of the mighty solar gravitational field. The Amazon ignored the radio, knowing that her eyes were doing her work, and that it was the one fact that, to the very death, the Martians would follow what they believed was liberty.

They did—aid through hours which seemed endless the Amazon still drove forward a beam of light on the instruments which registered the power of solar drag. Here increasing near the void of light, the beam itself was reduced out of true by the vast gravitational strains. The Ultra was inside the orbit of Mercury and still hurried onward, the shields over the ports now so dense that they were four inches thick, yet even at this the interminable sea of flame raging ahead made the Amazon fear that her sight would be increasingly impaired. Yet on the other hand she dared not take her gaze away from that cauldron of fluid energies, for it, depended the success of her plan.

Solar prominence reached out unthinkingly into space. The corona tumbled all the way behind that mighty swirling circle sweeping ever nearer. Then, as the instruments showed that the deadline had been reached, the Amazon swung the Ultra violently sideways and with a terrific burst of power swept diagonally to her forward course. The sun in one side of her instead of straight ahead.

According to the gauge she had just crossed the diagonal margin of safety between outer space and the gravitational field of the sun. Of necessity she gave the atomic power plant every vestige of energy in a desperate bid to tear free of the sun's inexorable grip and fight back into the region where his influence would progressively weaken.

Then, with a rumbling feeling of horror, she began to wonder if she had left things until too late. She was not taking any heed. Free through the Ultra was moving diagonally to the left, of flame, it was also drifting slowly toward it.

With grim eyes the Amazon stared through the shield, satisfied at least that her plan, in essence, had worked. In a chain, unable to save themselves, the entire armada of flying saucers had followed her across the line and was

streaming down toward that incandescent furnace of boiling energies, which could, under no fair fire, bearing laterally into the sun, had proven a success. Even as she watched, the flying saucers became remote against the darkened void and finally they vanished.

Quickly the Amazon switched in the Ultra's motors which had the effect of deadening the power impulse. The Ultra jerked and strained but it still did not jerk its outward drift. Jumped out of the motor chair the Amazon went over to the power plant and looked at it. The block of copper from which the energy was derived was shaking at an alarming speed. Once it had entirely disappeared there was nothing to stop the Ultra from following the doomed flying saucers to destruction.

Turbing, she raced out of the control room to one of the storage chambers and brought forth two more copper cylinders. Of necessity she had to switch off the current which she fired the block into place, and in that time she had lost a million miles of distance. The heat in the room increased to intolerable proportions even through the heavily insulated shield. Motionless, the Amazon sat at the control board, peering through slitted eyes at the terrifying vision outside. Playing with solar gravity would bring her back had never attempted and she was wondering if, in destroying the Martian race, she had brought her too far.

The power plant hummed and whined incessantly as she gave it the maximum thrust. The needles continued motionless on the dial. The vessel was still travelling diagonally to the sun, but rather pulled away from it, toward it. There was also the danger that beneath the furious heat blasting through space the rocket tubes would melt and fuse and so stop the power plant operating.

Still hunched, the Amazon still man-handled the switches, giving a little tension here, removing it there, easing the vessel into a safe waiting, circling, diving. The windows were being blasted shields. They seemed to be dancing with darkness and the girl knew with growing horror that, masked though the solar glare was, the radiations were seeping through and damaging her sight.

Weakly she got up and stumbled to a cupboard, taking from it a pair of dense goggles which she slipped over her face. They blinded her completely but she prayed that they would at least

stop the radiations driving at her. Yet, much as she continued operating the switches.

She sat at her intense belief as she heard the sudden intake of power, as she heard the screaming struggle against a superior giant. It was it, only it was not. Breathing hard, the girl played her fingers up and down the control switches and the sun's heat seemed to become steadily the wreathed the gaggle from her eyes and looked at the sun. She saw the sun, the darkness and her eyes threatened unmercifully.

The radiations were swirling free. The Ultra was slowly pulled away from that blinding mass in space, gaining speed with every foot. With her eyes shut the Amazon drove, and the sun's glare faded until finally the Ultra had crossed the dangerous limit and was back in free space.

Slowly relaxing, the girl snatched the automatic pilot in position and staggered away from the control chair to lie down on the wallbed. "For nearly an hour she lay flat, a hand over her eyes; then she opened them and saw the sun, the switch which raised the screen from the second.

First, even the brilliant sunshine seemed faded and weak and the shadows imperceptibly dark; then with the passage of time the darkness began to lift and the landscape came into view. Her eyes faded. The radiations, which had been more than sufficient to destroy a man, were now harmless, and with her super-normal physique only numbed the optic nerves. Now the sunniness was dissipating and with it came a clear return of sight and gathering bodily strength.

She got up and gave a glance outside. She was far enough away from the sun now to be sure of safety. Infinitely distant, shining with the brilliance of a diamond, was Venus, and in the near foreground, Mercury.

Turning to the short-wave radio she switched it on, contacting Earth by direct transmission. It was a long time with the static wave from the sun, before any clear answer came through the air. The voice was somewhat hoarse, but clearly that Chris Wilson was connected. His voice, speaking over nearly a million miles of space, sounded free and symmetrical.

"Then you're still safe. VIT that's fine hearing."

"Yes, I'm safe," she agreed, her voice heavy. "I've only nearly a week, though I'm only 3,000,000 miles from the sun, and into it have gone all the Martians we needed to worry about."

"What! You flung them in the sun?"

"They flung themselves—but I led them into it. That chapter is finished. We have no more enemy. Many any time we want. I'd like you to start these ultrasonic projects going and destroy the metal-nets. The job shouldn't take more than a week. When I get back to Earth I'll root out what few Martians there are in Earth lodges and destroy them. On my way back I'll stop at Venus for a while with Ruth and inform her that Howard is alive and well."

"See you later, then," Chris said. "And I'd go to work with the projector right away. I have all the locations mapped out."

"Good!"

The Amazon switched off and sat back thoughtfully, smiling a little to herself.

Which should surely leave the inner circle of planets free from any shadow. "Certainly the Martian chapter is closed—or almost."

Getting to his feet she went up the corridor and unlocked the hidden door where she had put the unconscious Ilian and his dead companion. She dragged them both far to the left, out of the control room and laid them on the floor, moving a switchboard control.

A section of the floor gave way into a trap below, dropping the bodies into it. The floor re-extended itself and a second trap into the void opened. The Amazon looked out of the window and presently detected two shapes—masses of gray dust following the Ultra, bodies bound to cosmic powder by the inconceivable force of outer space, and chased to the apocryphal by its slight gravity field.

She watched the remains for a long moment—then glancing in the direction of brilliant Venus she began to chart her course.

THE END.



By Mary Sergeant

A shipboard romance in which the future of some of the feminine passengers is dramatically changed

COMING NEXT WEEK